

# lunchbox magic

The **lunchbox blues** affect both the mum faced with the daily dilemma of what to prepare for her family and the eater faced with soggy, boring limp-looking food, resulting in many lunches landing in the school or office dustbin.

But, it is easier than you think to lift the packed lunch to new heights of innovative and tasty ideas jam-packed with nutrition and health-giving qualities. Forget the martyr approach and allow your imagination to take flight and you will actually enjoy packing up those lunchboxes; the family will look forward to opening their boxes and most of all, you will know that they are getting a lunch that is good for them.

Lunchboxes should contain a portable feast which is well-planned, containing fruit, vegetables, some protein and a carbohydrate. It is not essential to include a sandwich, but if you do, make it interesting and healthy, for example: whole wheat or rye bread spread with cottage cheese, topped with very thinly sliced fresh pear and watercress or shredded lettuce. Even the kids will prefer this to peanut butter and jam! Or sliced ham, thinly sliced fresh pineapple, cheese and cucumber.

A delicious crunchy alternative to a sandwich could be rice cakes, rye biscuits, even the corn cakes which have found their way on to supermarket shelves more recently. In this instance, accompany them with a dip packed separately in a small covered container – be adventurous and try a variety of combinations.

## DELICIOUS DIP NO. 1

- celery, finely chopped
- hard-boiled egg, chopped
- carrot, finely grated
- cucumber, diced finely
- mayonnaise
- mild mustard (optional)
- seasoning: salt and pepper

## DELICIOUS DIP NO. 2

- any cold meat diced
- diced gherkin
- diced tomato
- chunky cottage cheese mixed with small amount of plain yoghurt or salad dressing
- diced spring onion (optional)

To encourage the kids to eat fresh veggies, cut carrots, cucumber, sweet peppers and celery into matchsticks, pop into a separate plastic bag and include with the rest of the lunch. Many children complain that fresh fruit lands up bruised and unappetizing-looking by the time it is lunch-break; rather prepare sliced pineapple, apple and pear (drizzled with lemon juice to prevent discoloration), plum, peach etc beforehand and seal in a small plastic bag or cling-wrap.

Pop in a handful of dried fruit and nuts to prevent the dreaded 3pm slump, when blood sugar levels tend to dip, especially if your child is active and going on to extra-mural sports after school. You will find a delicious wonderful range of nuts, dried fruit and minced dried fruit at your nearest Fruit & Veg City outlet.

custom designed for you



And don't forget to always include at least 350-500 ml liquid for school children in the form of fruit juice or non-sweetened cordial to maintain hydration during their active busy school day.

So, let the magic begin, with healthy sweet treats...

## Chocolate Rice Crispy Clusters

- 50 ml sweet molasses
  - 20 ml olive oil
  - 15 ml (1 tablespoon) cocoa or carob powder
- Heat together in a hot pan till bubbling, then add:
- 5 ml (1 teaspoon) bicarbonate of soda
  - 250 ml (1 cup) Rice Crispies

Remove from the heat and stir in your choice of:

- 125 ml (1/2 cup) sesame seeds, ground-up flaxseeds, sunflower seeds, chopped walnuts
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) raisins or chopped dried fruit

Spoon this mixture into paper cookie cups and allow to cool.

## Toffee Base for Crunchy Seed Bars

This toffee base makes a good alternative to peanut brittle. In a heavy bottomed pan, heat the following till bubbling:

- 100 ml sweet molasses

Add the following ingredients:

- 250 ml (1 cup) chopped nuts & seeds, eg sunflower, sesame, walnuts, almonds, etc.

Flavour option: add 15 ml (1 tablespoon) cocoa or carob powder, or 5 ml (1 teaspoon) instant coffee powder

Extra choices:

- 125 ml (1/2 cup) raisins, chopped dried fruit

Turn off heat and keep stirring till the toffee becomes sticky and smells like caramel. Careful not to burn it!

Tip out the mixture onto a greased tray and spread it into a slab. As it cools and hardens, slice in squares. Wrap in cellophane, or spoon this mixture into small paper cookie cases.

